



## Bridgend Farmhouse Eco-Bothy Build and outdoor play area training programme



Eco-Bothy Build training day September 2019

### Summary

We would like to ask EH Direct for a funding contribution towards the costs of Bridgend Farmhouse's Eco-Bothy and outdoor play area volunteer training programme. Volunteers and trainees will be offered the unique opportunity to work with a diverse mix of people from their community, to learn sustainable construction skills and build their own unique community facility.

The project started in January 2019, although community designs began before that. The project has supported disadvantaged local residents in poverty and with health issues, homeless people and people in recovery, single parents, and a wide range of others. Through the volunteer sessions and training people strengthen community connections, decrease social isolation, improve their health and confidence, learn new skills, and contribute to Bridgend Farmhouse being a hub where people and place flourish.

Once completed, the timber framed straw bale Eco-Bothy with a turf roof, along with the outdoor play space, will host activities which work towards Bridgend Farmhouse's charitable aims as a space for the local community and those that built it to access and benefit from.

### What is the Need?

Community consultation carried out between 2012 and 2016 showed a clear need for a shelter on site in which groups can comfortably enjoy outdoor activities at Bridgend and out in Craigmillar Castle Park, and for a place which can host community learning and activities, fully accessible outdoor play, as well as the significance of a training programme where people can be supported to build this facility to-



gether. Our recent community action research in 2020 of 397 local residents re-asserted that need, particularly for local accessible outdoor play, and family nature engagement.

A key theme emerging from our consultations has been around training needs in the community. This is particularly important to people with no qualifications, estimated as 28% of residents in our area of benefit by the City of Edinburgh Council.

Health inequalities are also very high in our surrounding communities. We work closely with the local GP Link workers for referrals into these projects to help reduce the impact of, and address the causes of mental ill health and social isolation.

Facilitated by designers and architects, with support from Scottish Ecological Design and Architecture (SEDA), the community have formed an idea in keeping with local natural and built heritage, which will benefit people both during its construction and once it is built.



*A consultation day. The community asked for more opportunities to learn practical skills and to build their own community space together.*

*"It's an amazing sense of community – what community should be."*

*"It has given me focus, a sense of belonging and an ability to explore lots of creative ideas"*

*"It's just great to be outdoors – whatever the weather. I always sleep better after and feel great. I wish I had my own garden but this is good."*

Quotes from people who regularly participate in Bridgend Farmhouse's activities.

### **The Eco-Bothy**

At 27sqm, the environmentally friendly Bothy will use reused, recycled, natural and locally sourced materials as much as possible. It will be a fully wheelchair accessible community resource for cultural and educational events, outdoor learning and will showcase possibilities of sustainable living. Specialist weekend training courses will be led by expert green builders.

### **Who will benefit?**

Trainees and volunteers will be predominantly from our local communities, whilst we also receive some referrals from organisations like Crisis, Turning Point Scotland, and local GP Link workers.

One of the special things about Bridgend Farmhouse is our asset-based approach. We value equality and diversity highly, reflected in our welcoming and enabling ethos. A volunteer thanked us for this, saying, *"It's good to connect with all the different people locally you'd never get to meet otherwise."*

We have already had over 40 trainees benefit from the programme, and with further funding anticipate 30 trainees benefiting from further training sessions.



At Bridgend Farmhouse, we have excellent relationships with other community organisations. The relationships we build with people through these courses and activities often result in us finding out about areas in their lives where they need support, which we can help them to access by referring to relevant support agencies.

### **Training**

Build management and specialist training and is offered by the Scottish Ecological Design Association (SEDA). Training so far has included timber-frame building, straw-bale insulation, green roofing and cladding. Future training opportunities including clay rendering, joinery, play area design, and landscaping. Trainees learn heritage and sustainable construction skills, using traditional methods and tools. All training is hands on and encourages trainees to consider sustainability factors in design and construction. As well as the construction skills, participants will learn skills pertaining to teamwork, tool use, project planning, and peer support.



*Roof-building with trainees in February 2020*

### **Impact**

People from a broad variety of backgrounds will work together towards a shared aim, fostering connections which might otherwise not have a chance to form. The Training and Volunteering Programme builds on Bridgend Farmhouse's community building, naturally fostering greater resilience in people who take part and offering a space to connect with others after the impact of the isolation of the covid-19 restrictions.

As well as benefits to the trainees, and future users of these facilities, it also provides benefits to carers. For example one carer explains the benefit she derived from taking part in the Bridgend Farmhouse activity days with her husband, Jeremy, *'It was really good for me to have somewhere Jeremy could go and muck in under good supportive supervision. The drop-in got Jeremy out and about, and otherwise he would have been stuck in the house, and lonely. As his full-time carer, this allowed me to do my work, and to get a break and some time to myself as well.'*

### **Legacy**

If this funding is secured, we hope to re-start the training programme in April, once safe to do outdoor volunteering again. If so, we anticipate completing the Bothy Build by July/August 2021 and the play area by September/October, ready to host community activity. Partners and community members indicate that these activities will primarily be outdoor classroom, meeting space, arts/storytelling/performance venue, a space for social gatherings and family events, an outdoor classroom, a



showcase space of ecological building techniques, and a traditional Bothy as a place to sleep over for groups on trips in the park and woodlands. We expect that at least 250 children and young people will benefit from and use the Bothy and play area each year, along with their parents/carers benefiting through family play and also respite. We also expect at least 100 adults per year to benefit from use of the Bothy for events, activities, weekend retreats and workshops.

### Request

A donation of between £500 and £1,000, or any financial contribution, would help significantly towards the final fundraising target to continue and complete the training programme and the completion of the Bothy and outdoor play area.

### Thank you

Thank you for to all the EH direct team for this opportunity and for reading about our work. With a little support, people can experience significant improvements to their lives and circumstances, and we think that this project could make a significant difference to people in our community, both during the current challenges faced, but long into the future too. It's wonderful you are providing donations and support to local community groups at this very difficult time we all find ourselves in.



Play area consultation with children in January 2020

### See some quotes below of participants on the training programme so far;

- ✧ *"Volunteering on the Bothy at Bridgend Farmhouse has taught me many new skills such as basic carpentry and straw bale construction, these new skills have helped my confidence soar. I now know that I can create/build anything if I really want to, which I wasn't aware of before the build. Working closely with other volunteers has helped me to be myself without worrying what people think and helped me tolerate difficult social situations."*
- ✧ *"Being a part of the Bothy building team has been a great experience, unmatched to any other volunteering work I've done before. It is amazing to see something being created from scratch, especially if you participate in the process and when it's for a good cause. During the few months of my volunteering with the Bothy team I've learn many skills on woodwork and building construction in general. I can't look at the buildings around me in the same way - now I am really impressed by how much work it took to build them! The team here is amazing, always helpful and respectful. We've become a bit like a family. I wish there were more projects like this available for the communities".*
- ✧ *"I am enjoying the Bothy Build so much, I am learning how to use different tools and the construction techniques. It's a really good experience to build with all the volunteers helping and learning from each other."*
- ✧ *"I enjoy working on the bothy because it helps me feel more confident learning and doing things of a practical nature that I am good at, and seeing the physical result of things I've worked on and had fun doing. I don't think I could have learnt these natural building techniques anywhere else; Bridgend has enabled me to learn and do the work in an equal opportunity environment and at no cost to me other than the time and energy I put in. Its hard work and fun too!"*